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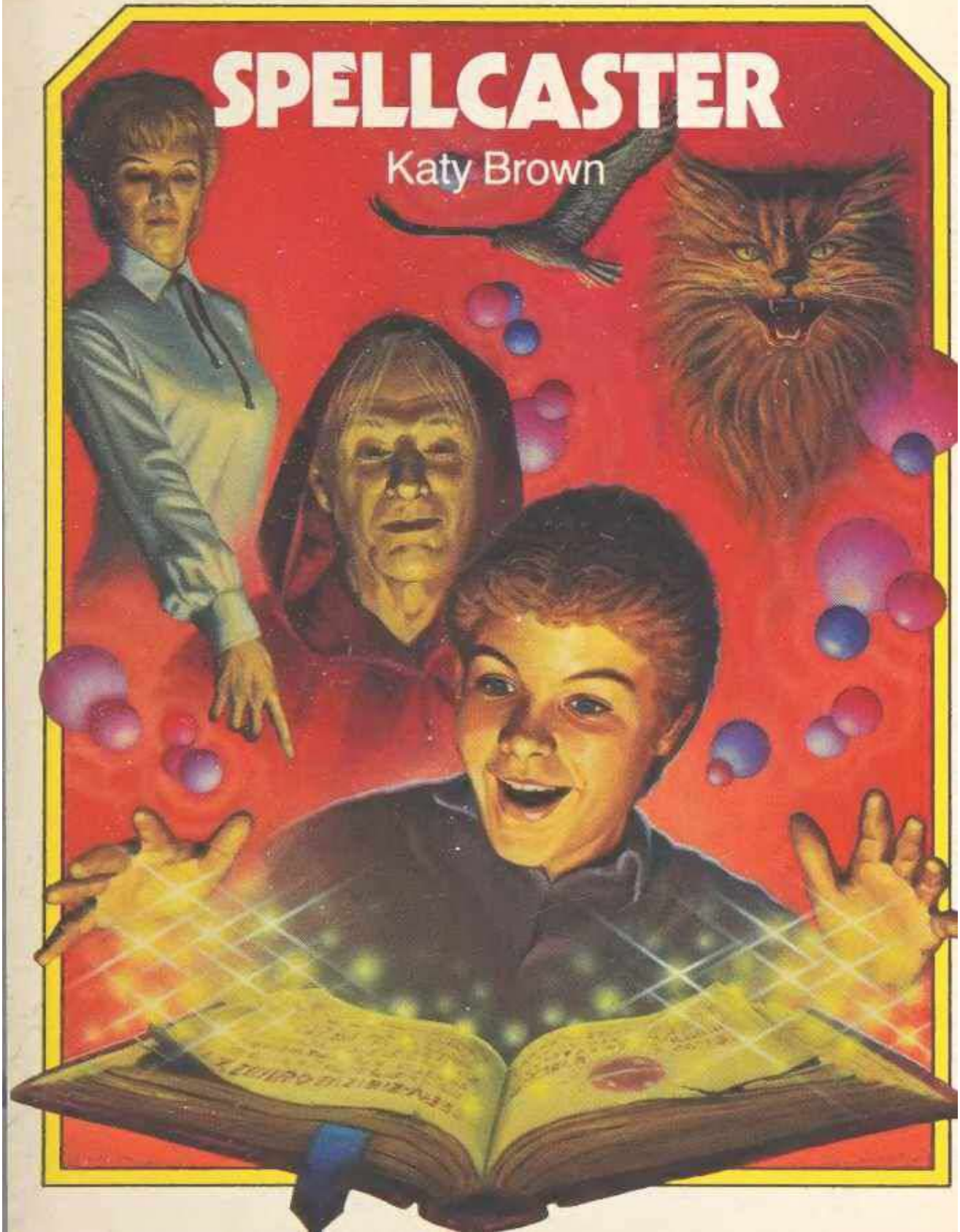
SPELLCASTER

Katy Brown



SPELLCASTER

Katy Brown

Illustrations by Ray Lago

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BEWARE!!!

DO NOT READ THIS BOOK FROM BEGINNING TO END

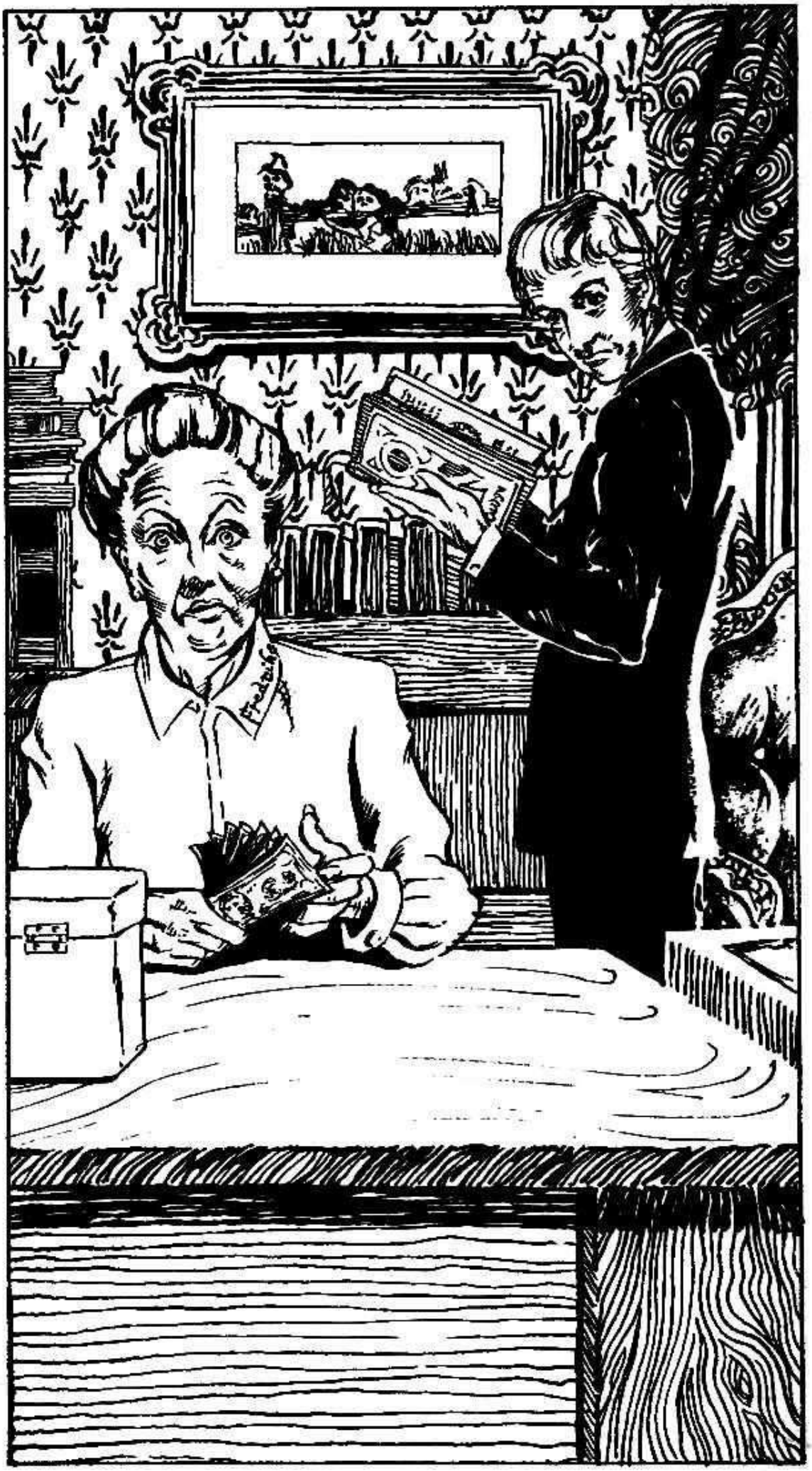
You are about to open the cover of *SPELLCASTER*, a magic book. In your hands rests great power. But be warned that you aren't the only one interested in this ancient book.

The people you meet may want the book's power for themselves. And they will stop at nothing to get it. At times, you will even have to fight magic with magic.

How it all ends depends on you. Follow the directions at the bottom of each page. If you run into trouble, go back and make another choice. If you are doing well, keep going!

Remember, with magic, things aren't always what they seem. Be brave! Be daring! Be careful!

Begin your adventure on PAGE 3.



When you saw the sign announcing a Tag Sale at the Old Puritan Inn, your imagination took off. Somehow you thought you'd find an antique coin worth thousands or a priceless painting selling for a quarter. But now that you're here, all you can see are chipped teacups and broken chairs in a cluttered old living room.

You check out a shelf of dollar books, and among the titles you see *Puritan Ethics* and *The World of Berries*—BORING! Just as you are about to leave, you spy an interesting-looking book up behind the rest.

You work it from its hiding place and blow away the dust. Gold letters seem to glow against the ancient leather binding. The title fascinates you: *SPELLCASTER: SPELLS AND CHARMS*. You open it and read, "In your hands rests timeless power. Apply it wisely!"

"Wow!" you breathe, fishing in your pocket. It's your last dollar, but "timeless power" is worth it!

A blonde woman beside a cash box and a gray-haired man in a black suit—the only other people at the sale—glare at you. The woman's white uniform has *Fredrika* embroidered on the collar, so you assume she works at the inn.

Count your money while you turn to PAGE 4.

"Where'd you get that book?" she demands fiercely. When her sudden hostility makes you speechless, she mutters, "Why must I deal with *children*!"

You glance at the gray-haired man, who is staring back at you. His eyes are red-rimmed, and his pupils are huge—as if he's been in the dark. He gives you the creeps! Without warning, he swoops forward, grabbing for your book. "I want that!" he growls. "Give it here!"

You snatch it away and slam your money on the cash box. "I got it first! It's mine!"

You turn to Fredrika and say, "It's just one of the dollar books. That guy tried to steal it from me!"

Fredrika still looks angry, but then she shrugs nonchalantly and puts your money into the box.

Well, anyway, the book is now yours!

Triumphantly, you hurry to the safety of the nearby park to study the old book. Thumbing through the brittle pages, you wrinkle your nose at the musty scent. With a nervous shiver, you scan the table of contents and read:

REVENGE..... *PAGE 26*
TRANSFORMATION ..... *PAGE 54*
... *PAGE 62*

Which one will you try first? Make your choice and go to that page in this book.

You sprint across the lawn and dive under the nearest bush. Just in time! You never knew cats panted. But they do. At least you do.

Your cover is almost blown, however, by a flock of jittery sparrows. Fredrika glances up to watch the birds swirl into the elm tree. She walks right up to *SPELLCASTER*, slyly looks around, grabs it, and heads back the way she came.

You follow her to the Old Puritan Inn. You've got to get the book back, or else you'll spend the rest of your days as a cat!

You circle the old building and see two possible openings: a kitchen window that's partially open (there's a pie cooling on the sill), or a cellar door that swings partly ajar. A strong animal smell hangs in the darkness there. The kitchen is the most direct way into the house, but dangerously exposed. The cellar seems to be a safer way in, but what's causing that smell?

Want to try the kitchen window? Turn to PAGE 23.

Want to try the cellar door? Turn to PAGE 53.

"How To Become a Hawk," you read. Sounds like fun.

The instructions list what you need to complete the spell (clover leaves and rock salt) and the words you must say.

Half an hour later you're ready to begin.

The setting sun turns everything reddish as you sit back under the old elm. The pages of *SPELLCASTER* glow in the weird red light. You hurry through the magic, scattering the clover leaves and rock salt according to the directions.

You feel woozy. You stare at the elm tree in front of you. Then, with a POP, the branches that had been at eye level on the old tree are now three feet above your head.

I must have fallen, you think in a daze. You move your arm to raise yourself, but you drift upward.

With a yelp that sounds more like a screech, you look down and see feathers where your T-shirt used to be!

Soar on over to *PAGE 7*.

"The spell *works!*" you yell with a haunting whistle. You beat your powerful wings and glide upward into the darkening sky. Your eyesight is incredible!

From high above the elm, you see a nervous field mouse scamper under a flat rock. You glide in wide circles and shortly find yourself looking down on the Old Puritan Inn and two people who are near the carriage house.

Even in the fading light, you can read *Fredrika* on the woman's collar and count the pockets on the old man's suit. You drift lower, watching.

The two, locked in an animated discussion, break off when your shadow brushes over them. They point at you and duck through the weathered carriage-house door.

What are they up to? They're acting very secretive. Maybe you should check them out. On the other hand, you're having a wonderful time flying and gliding.

If you want to swoop down for a closer look, glide to PAGE 51.

If you'd rather stay in the air, flip to PAGE 45.

8

As you stand your ground, Fredrika and the man face each other over the open book. They don't notice you at all!

"I won't let you take it, Fredrika," the gray-haired man says, his voice dripping with menace.

"You have no say here, Yark," Fredrika sneers. "You're nothing but a helpless, burnt-out wizard."

Yark snaps his fingers. A bolt of lightning smashes into the elm tree, and a huge branch crashes to the ground. The instant thunderclap hammers your eardrums. Yark smiles and says, "Helpless?"

Flip to PAGE 50.

You turn to run, but your four kitty paws slip on the hardwood floor. You lose vital seconds!

The old man easily scoops you up.

Go to PAGE 69. (And don't be such a fraidy cat next time.)

10

You stroll up to Fredrika and rub against her leg. Since she's the one who walked off with *SPELLCASTER*, you figure she's the one you need to watch.

After her initial reaction, you're surprised when she stoops to gather you in her arms. Scratching your chin, she crosses to a spindly table under a lace-curtained window. There's *SPELLCASTER*, lying open at "Transformation"! Could Fredrika have discovered your secret?

"Where were we?" she asks absently, dropping you on the floor to pick up the book. "Rats!" she says, tapping a finger on a page. "Giant rats! But the dreadful spell doesn't say how to get rid of one once you've created it!"

"That's why we need a familiar," Yark says with a sigh.

That's silly, you think. Everyone knows how to get rid of rats (giant or otherwise). Buy a trap! You try to share your information, but can only say, "Meow!"

Startled by your sound, Fredrika stares at you, then snaps her fingers. "That's it!" she says. "We don't need a familiar!"

You're glad she's gotten your message. Maybe you could just ask for the book, since she understood your last comment.

Just ask on PAGE 11.

"Meow?" you ask, hoping she'll hand over the book.

She *does* hand the book over . . . but to Yark. Then she swoops down, grabs you by the scruff of the neck, and spins around. "We could use a giant cat to get rid of the giant rat," she says.

You must be the giant cat she has in mind. Except you aren't a giant.

"We'll simply enlarge this cat," she tells Yark. "And send it into the cellar with the monster." *(Monster?!)*

No question about it. You don't want to get involved.

But you have no choice, you realize, as she heads outside. Yark tags along with *SPELLCASTER*, mumbling some magic words as he goes.

The door slams and you're in the dark! You look down at your paws. They're enormous! You figure you're about the size of a tiger! When your eyes adjust, you see a *giant rat*! He's in a cage, but he's trying to escape. Your cat instinct tells you to kill this rodent!

But you came to this crazy place to get *SPELLCASTER* back. Maybe you should try the door.

Which will you do?

If you fight the rat, go to PAGE 40.
If you try the door, go to PAGE 82.

12

You reach for the book.

Not a wise move, considering the magic forces involved.

Your body flares brightly for an instant, and you are reduced to a heap of cinders. Do we even have to mention that this is . . .

THE END

"Turning Yourself into a Cat," you read aloud, then skim the spell. "Looks easy."

You mumble the magic words, and . . . POOF! In a flurry of fur and whiskers, you become . . . a calico cat!

Slightly dazed, you see Fredrika, the woman from the Old Puritan Inn, hurrying toward you. She wants *SPELLCASTER*. And you're in no condition to stop her! You can't even grab the book and run! But you can hide and follow her!

You look around quickly and see two choices. You could climb the old elm (hoping to hide among the high leaves). Or you could race for the nearest bush (and hope she doesn't see you).

Which is it?

Climb the tree on PAGE 52.
Or dash for the bush on PAGE 5.

14

You find a deserted shed and enter. Safe for a while, you drop *SPELLCASTER* and try to turn the pages with your paws.

It takes a while, but you find the spell you need to reverse the magic.

POOF! It works! You're human again! You decide to make Fredrika and Yark pay for what they did! But how? Fight magic with magic—that's how.

You leaf through the book and find something just right: "Making Mice." Practicing the words of the spell under your breath, you return to the Old Puritan Inn and peer through the window.

Yark and Fredrika are standing just inside, with their backs to you. Following directions, you cast your spell. In a twinkling, they're reduced to tiny, confused white mice. You dash into the inn and trap them under a couple of teacups.

Then you call the local zoo and report that you've found a unique giant rat. Naturally, you get credit for finding the amazing rodent and become famous overnight. The mice amuse Mrs. Hodgkiss's class (and earn you an A+ in science).

The only long-lasting problem with this adventure is that you seem to have a constant craving for tuna.

THE END

"I can't leave without the book," she says. "I'll give you whatever you want."

"Look," you explain, "I don't want to sell. I'm leaving." You get up, but Fredrika grabs your arm.

"It's not safe for you to go anywhere with that book," she says. "The information in it is dangerous!"

"Dangerous?" you echo. "You're nuts! Let me go!" You snatch your arm from her grasp and walk toward the woods. "First that crazy old man tries to steal from me, and now this crazy woman!" you mutter.

"Stop!" she yells desperately.

As you enter the woods, you're startled by the old man in black from the Old Puritan Inn. He springs from behind a tree and lunges for you. He misses!

Maybe this book is more trouble than it's worth! you think. It means so much to these two, maybe you should hand it over. *But I paid for it! Why should I just give it away? Because I might get killed—that's why.*

The man lunges again, grabbing at the Mickey Mouse T-shirt you're wearing.

Quick! What'll you do?

Give it up? Hand it over on PAGE 74.
Fight for it? Go to PAGE 77.

16

"I really don't like dark places," you say. "And furthermore, taking me somewhere against my will is kidnapping. That's against the law," you point out. "Now if you'll excuse me . . ." You turn to leave.

Yark's iron grip fastens to your arm. "You are not the person I thought you were," he says a little sadly. "You aren't cut out to be a wizard's apprentice, after all."

You try to shake loose. You can't imagine what this madman will do.

Yark's steel-blue eyes inspect you closely. He nods and says, "You won't do for an apprentice. But you *will* become the world's most famous collector of rare books. You did show some talent in that area." He mutters something, then vanishes, taking the old book.

Alone under the elm tree, you only have a vague recollection of what happened.

Years later you gain a worldwide reputation for having one of the choicest collections of rare manuscripts. You specialize in titles and subjects having to do wih revenge. You make a small fortune auctioning your copy of the script of the old movie *Revenge of the Pink Panther*.

THE END

"Help!" you yell.

Yark claps his hands together and disappears in a puff of yellow smoke.

"Great," you mutter sourly, watching the giant snake advance. "Don't ever trust a wizard."

In less than a second, though, a giant furry beast pops out of thin air in front of you and attacks the cobra. In a furious, fur-flying, snarling battle, the rodent drives the snake toward the nearby woods.

Fascinated, you watch the battle—until it occurs to you that one of those creatures will be back shortly. You don't want to be around when that happens.

Remembering the strange forces surrounding the book a few minutes ago, you cautiously stoop down to pick up *SPELLCASTER*. Nothing happens. So you slap the book closed and hoist it under your arm. "Those two magicians must have caused the electricity," you reason out loud.

You run over the uneven lawn, away from the elm, casting a glance over your shoulder as you go. BAM! You run smack into something with enough force to send you sprawling. Dazed, you look up at the black figure of Yark.

"Going somewhere?" he asks.

Well, yes. Go to PAGE 25.

18

You decide to keep quiet as you follow Yark down the stairs. When you reach the floor of a large underground cavern, you see walls that glow with a soft green light of their own. Yark takes three measured steps, waves his arms, and says, "*Luminis!*"

Torches along the walls flare brilliantly! Across the cavern, a small lake of black water is fed by the wisp of a waterfall—that's what was making the sound of running water. Outcroppings of crystal sprout from the walls, and rainbow heaps of jewels lie scattered about the floor.

"Wow!" you gasp, turning in a circle to take it all in. "I never knew all this was here!"

Ignoring your statement, Yark begins, "You have shown four of the five qualities a wizard needs: curiosity, courage to try new things, caution, and the mastery of your own fear. Now for the fifth quality—study." He tilts his head back and looks at you down his long nose. "That means hard work—and following directions."

"That's a snap," you say, shrugging. "I get good marks in school."

Follow directions! Go on to PAGE 88.

20

You figure you can always lose Fredrika later if you have to, but now you'd like her to help you.

"We're almost there," you say as you near the elm tree in the park. But when you turn to look at her, Fredrika's gone! Vanished!

"That's weird," you mutter, looking around. When you can't find her, you hurry to the elm tree and find *SPELLCASTER* lying open right where you left it!

As you stoop to grab it, you feel a crackle of static crawl up your fingers and along your arm. Eerie blue light radiates from your hand.

Quick! Go to PAGE 21.

In the instant you hesitate, hand held over the manuscript, you hear two voices cut through the quiet of the park.

You look up and see the black-suited man standing next to the elm tree and pointing toward you. He's glaring over your shoulder.

You pivot to follow his gaze and see Fredrika standing behind you, also pointing in your direction.

The tingle of electricity along your arm draws your attention back to *SPELLCASTER*. What strange forces are coming out of this book? Prudently, you draw your hand away and are instantly relieved as the strange blue light fades from your hand.

Glancing from the book to the woman and then to the man, you suddenly grasp that they don't want *you*. They want the *book!*

"Mine!" they both claim at the same time.

"You're both wrong!" you insist. "It's mine."

Do you grab for it? Go to PAGE 12.

Do you want to watch them fight over it? Go to PAGE 8.

Yark leads you along a dark, twisting passage and stops before the huge oak door that leads to the Chamber of Whispering Spheres. Through a small barred window, you see many bright globes bobbing around in the room. They look like a cross between helium balloons and lightbulbs. *Are they alive?* you wonder.

"Pay no attention to what you might hear," Yark warns. "The spheres resent power," he adds mysteriously.

What power? you wonder, standing beside the door. At the sound of Yark's gold key in the lock, you hear a chorus of whispers from inside.

As Yark fumbles with the lock, you get an uneasy feeling that things aren't right here. Yark is acting very strangely, and those whispering spheres give you the creeps!

It's not too late to go to the Crystal Hall. On the other hand, you want Yark to think you are strong enough to make a decision and stick to it. Your career as a wizard might depend on how firm you are.

Which will it be?

If you go to the Crystal Hall now, turn to PAGE 37.

If you enter the Chamber of Whispering Spheres, go to PAGE 81.

You spring through the window, accidentally nudging the pie off the sill. It lands on the kitchen floor with a loud SPLAT!

You only have a second to dive under the maple table before Fredrika storms in. She is not pleased about the blueberry mess on the floor. She storms out of the room, muttering something about a mop.

As soon as she's gone, you race toward the living room to look for *SPELLCASTER*. You figure you'll have a few minutes while Fredrika cleans up the kitchen.

You cautiously peek into the room and see the old man who tried to steal the book from you at the inn.

"Well, well!" he says. "A calico cat! Where's Fredrika been keeping you? You're just what we need!"

Need??? For what? you wonder.

He's coming to pick you up! You could act casual and let him. Or you could try to run for it. What will you do?

If you run for it, go to PAGE 9.
If you act casual, go to PAGE 69.

You decide to rush back to the park *without* Fredrika.

"I can't talk to you now!" you snap, rushing out the door. Sprinting back to the elm, you are relieved to find the old book lying open where you left it.

As you grab it, the nasty gray-haired man from the Old Puritan Inn steps out from behind the tree.

"I thought you'd be back," he says, and smiles evilly at you. "I've been waiting."

"I have to go now," you say, backing away from the strange man. "I think I hear someone calling," you lie. You spin and take one running step. The last thing you hear is the command "STOP!"

You feel like one of those little bugs trapped in an acrylic paperweight. You can't run, can't breathe. But wait! You can move your right hand!

Use it to turn to PAGE 27.

"I was just going home to feed my hamster," is all you can think of to tell Yark.

"You will come with me," he commands. "I am Yark, Wizard of the Endless Cave," he says. "I have need of an apprentice. You will do."

"Do what!?" you ask. "I'm not going anywhere until you answer some questions."

"I don't answer questions," he says.

"Then buzz off." Fixing your face in a smug sneer, you turn to leave.

"Impudent toad!" Yark roars. You hear him snap his fingers and spit out a word that sounds like "Batsniggle!"

Suddenly, you aren't walking anymore. You're hopping! You look down at your long, toady toes and open your mouth to tell Yark what you think of him.

"Croak!" you protest, watching Yark take the book and walk away.

You are hopping mad. But, unfortunately, not in any position to do anything about it except *croak!*

THE END

REVENGE

To enjoy revenge's reflection,
You must know your own perfection.
Then repeat this simple charm:
Let mine enemy come to harm!
Wave a raven feather black
To enforce this charm's attack.

There are several people you'd like to pay back. Joe and Amy, for example. If they hadn't snitched on you, your mother never would have guessed it was you who'd telephoned Lisbon last month on a dare. But you want to do a really good job when you curse them. So you decide to practice a little first.

A sly grin forms on your face. That woman Fredrika should learn to respect her customers. A little revenge might be just what *this* customer orders! Then again, that gray-haired man could use a lesson. He should mind his own business and not snatch books from kids.

You look around for a raven feather . . . and . . . surprise! There is a black feather on the lawn under the elm. You pick it up. It *looks* like a raven's feather.

Now, whom should you practice on first?

If you'd like to practice on Fredrika, go to PAGE 33.

If you try a revenge spell on the grabby gray-haired man, turn to PAGE 36.

The gray-haired man strolls around you. You're still under some kind of spell. You can't move. He nods in approval of what he sees. "You have possibilities," he says, finally. "I've been looking for a wizard's apprentice with skill and daring. You may be that person."

Wizard's apprentice! This guy's a real weirdo! For a brief instant, you're sorry you got that old book—even for a dollar.

The man's steel-blue eyes seem to drill through you. He passes his hand in front of your face and mumbles something.

You draw in a sudden breath of air and tumble forward, released from the spell.

"Leave me alone!" you blurt. "You can't treat people like that!" Instantly, you regret speaking, as the wizard seems to inflate before your eyes.

"I AM YARK, WIZARD OF THE ENDLESS CAVE. I CAN DO ANYTHING." His voice is so deep and loud, you're sure he can be heard two blocks away. "You will come with me," he announces.

If you don't want to be a wizard's apprentice, turn to PAGE 16.

If you think Yark is an interesting character, go along to PAGE 29.

You jump away from the oncoming snake and hear its deadly hiss as it strikes. It misses!

The snake whips around and plunges toward Yark. The old man mumbles a quick spell, pulls a handful of brown dust from a pocket, and flings it on the snake. The snake turns to stone.

"Let's go," Yark tells you. "I've used a quick-fix spell on Fredrika. She'll come out of it in a few minutes." He bends to pick up *SPELLCASTER*.

"That's mine!" you insist. "I paid for it. Drop it!"

"If it is truly yours," Yark's honey-smooth voice invites, "you pick it up."

Pick up the tale on PAGE 31.

Tucking the book under your arm, you follow Yark.

"It's lucky for you I was watching," he says, striding into the woods around the park.

"What do you mean? I was doing fine," you say, keeping pace.

"Don't try revenge again until you can handle it!" he warns, looking sternly over his shoulder. "If you'd used a raven feather (as you should have), you'd be trapped in a shiny new mirror right now!"

"Mirror?" you ask, leafing through the book. "Where does it say that?"

Yark stops so abruptly you run into him. "Give me that," he snaps, yanking the book from your grasp.

Jabbing a bony finger under the first two lines of the verse, he announces, "Here. On page 26. The 'reflection' is a mirror, and the warning is quite clear—you must be perfect yourself before you try attacking others." He slaps the book shut, nearly closing your hand in it. You grab it back, trying to appear braver than you feel.

"Perhaps you should be tested further," Yark mutters, stroking his pointed chin.

Please turn to PAGE 39.

Clearing your throat, you hurry to catch up with the wizard.

"You know that trick back there in the dark?" you say, clanging down the steps behind him.

"Yes," he says, "we wizards call that the sorter. It sorts out the weak and fearful. You did much better than I did when I followed old Garth down here the first time."

You're flattered by his words, but something in his tone of voice makes you uneasy. He sounds almost jealous. You decide against further comment about his tricks as you both reach the bottom of the stairs.

You're deep underground in a cavern whose walls glow with a soft green light of their own. Yark takes three measured steps, waves, and intones, "*Luminis!*"

"Wow!" you gasp.

Torches along the walls blaze, casting a flickering light on crystal outcroppings in the stone. Heaps of jewels like rainbows lie scattered on the floor. Across the cavern, the wisp of a waterfall plunges into a small lake of black water—that's what's making the sound of running water.

"Excuse me," Yark says abruptly, walking toward the shadows. "I will be back soon. Look around."

Yes, look around on PAGE 66.

You reach for the ancient book. Once more the strange static forces crackle along your skin. Snapping your hand away, you spin to face Yark.

"Stop it!" you demand. "Stop your stupid electricity!"

Yark chuckles, somehow not sounding friendly. "Me?" Yark asks innocently.

"You. Stop it!"

"I am Yark, Wizard of the Endless Cave. And I am not causing the static you feel. You are generating the negative forces."

"That's ridiculous!" you snap.

"I'd say it's greed," Yark says. "This ancient book rejects greedy novices like you."

"But you and Fredrika both tried to get it," you say.

"We aren't novices," he reminds you as he bends down to collect the book. "Besides, I've been looking for an apprentice. You seem bright. Interested?"

"Wizard's apprentice," you murmur, trying on the title like a new suit. "Sure, why not? Sounds like fun."

Begin your fun on PAGE 44.

You really like this old code. It looks neat—like a cross between bird tracks and letters.

"But why would wizards use a code?" you wonder aloud, leaning back against the elm's rough trunk.

Then, remembering the notes you pass in class, you think it would be nifty to put *them* in code. It's really embarrassing when the note falls on the floor and the wrong person reads it. Maybe wizards need to write things they don't want anyone else to read—spells, for instance.

You're so busy thinking about codes, you almost don't recognize the woman in white from the Old Puritan Inn. She's walking across the park toward you.

You remember that her name is Fredrika and that she's not too friendly. What does she want? Why is she coming toward you?

Don't be paranoid! you tell yourself. *She's probably just out for a walk.*

You've got enough time to get up and leave before she gets close. But why waste the energy? Go or stay?

Stay? Turn to PAGE 55.
Go? Turn to PAGE 42.

Fredrika, you think, *should get the first dose of revenge*. You double-check the spell to make sure you've got it right.

You clutch the feather and swish it back and forth. (Why wasn't the spell more specific about *how* you should wave it?) Closing your eyes, you picture the uniformed blonde while you murmur the lines from the poem:

To enjoy revenge's reflection,
You must know your own perfection.
Then repeat this simple charm:
Let mine enemy come to harm!

A hollow POP! snaps your eyes open. You jerk your head around and prickle with fear as you realize that you're back in the living room of the Old Puritan Inn, facing the fierce-looking woman who sold you the book. Yes, it's Fredrika, and she's rushing toward you.

"How did you get in?" she demands. "Everything's locked!"

Well . . . you seem to be in deep trouble.

How deep? Turn the PAGE to 34 and see.

You hold up your hands to fend off Fredrika's attack. She stops midway, looks at your hands, then laughs with relief. She's laughing so hard her eyes water.

"I've never heard of a burglar threatening anyone with a pigeon feather," she says.

"It's a raven feather," you insist. "And I'm no burglar!" *Why isn't she in pain?* you wonder. *Don't these spells work?*

"I hope you haven't lost the book," Fredrika says, eyeing you closely. "That could be dangerous. You will need my help getting it back."

Forget revenge, you think. *Get back to the park! But you might need Fredrika's help. Should you take her with you?*

If you take Fredrika, turn to PAGE 20.
If you want to go alone, turn to PAGE 24.

You feel your way back up the metal stairs. The blackness surrounds you like ink. You sense something in the blackness with you. It's walking beside you.

Your heart is beating so hard you think it will explode. You climb and climb . . . five, six, seven steps. You run up three more. Whatever is hidden in the blackness keeps pace.

You stop. Lungs aching, heart about to explode, you pause on the iron steps.

In the silence while you catch your breath, you realize that you have walked up more steps than you walked *down!* Is this some kind of magic? You also realize that nothing has harmed you.

You stand still and grip the metal rail beside you. *Get a grip on your imagination, too,* you tell yourself.

"Well," you mutter, "going back again seems out of the question. And since I'm not sure what is down these stairs, I think I'll just stay where I am."

A faint chuckle in the darkness makes your skin crawl.

Get ready to run, and turn to PAGE 72.

You decide to practice a revenge spell on that grabby old man. Someone *really* needs to teach him a lesson!

You murmur the first two lines:

"To enjoy revenge's reflection,
You must know your own perfection."

Waving the black feather up and down, you repeat the words:

"Let mine enemy come to harm!"

Nothing happens.

"Dumb book," you mutter. "I wasted a dollar."

Maybe you were waving the feather the wrong way. You try again. Waving the feather from side to side, you again chant:

"Let mine enemy come to harm!"

You feel trapped, as if walls are closing in on you. You lift your hand as if to push free and you bump into a smooth, cold, invisible barrier.

The word *reflection* echoes in your mind. It doesn't make sense, but somehow, you know what happened. You are trapped inside a mirror—and the mirror *and* you are shattering!

Talk about seven years' bad luck. You have time to reflect on the power of words . . . words like *poetic justice* and *revenge*.

THE END

Yark is strangely quiet as he leads the way through a maze of passages. Even the shadows seem menacing.

You pause outside the Crystal Hall, your scalp prickling with fear. Something tells you not to enter this room. But Yark shoves you ahead of him, muttering, "Let's get this over with."

The Crystal Hall sparkles with rainbow lights that dance off the quartz spikes covering the walls and ceiling. It's like being suspended in a giant light show.

"The most powerful crystal balls are made from the crystals in this room," Yark says. But you're having trouble concentrating on his voice, because when he speaks, you hear the babbling of a hundred other people at the same time.

The fiery reds, electric blues, and dazzling yellows of the lights run together, spinning in your head. You try to move out of the hall, but Yark blocks your way.

What's happening? you wonder as your mind clouds.

You're uncontrollably dizzy—spinning—turning—whirling—passing out!

Quick! Go to PAGE 38!

You snap awake and find yourself in the passage just outside the Crystal Hall. Deep, velvety shadows replace the dancing lights of a moment ago.

"Better now?" Yark asks, dragging you to your feet.

"I guess so," you answer, shaking the last of the dizziness from your foggy head. "What happened?"

"Trance," Yark says flatly. "That happens sometimes . . . but only with the most pow . . ." His voice trails to a whisper while he squints at you suspiciously.

"Trance?" you ask, peering cautiously into the hypnotic chamber. "Like a fortune teller?"

Yark ignores your question. His look alarms you. Is it envy? Jealousy? He hinted you have power. Could you have more power than Yark himself?

"Tell me exactly what you saw and heard in the Crystal Hall," he demands. When you hesitate, Yark arches an eyebrow and snarls, "Tell me!"

Even though he is your teacher, you aren't sure you trust him. On the other hand, he has tremendous power, and you don't want to make him too angry.

If you tell him, go to PAGE 56.
If you don't tell, go to PAGE 71.

"I don't like tests," you say firmly. "Either take me as I am, or forget it!"

Yark's face turns purple as he explodes with rage. "You impudent toad!" he roars, leaping for your throat.

You hold up *SPELLCASTER* like a shield against his attack.

When nothing happens, you peek over the top of the book and see Yark smiling!

"You may be an impudent toad, but you remind me of another young wizard I knew many years ago." He runs his long fingers through his gray hair and chuckles. "No more tests, young apprentice." Yark tousles your hair. "Let's start training!"

Your training begins on PAGE 44.

The cat in you takes over. You're going to get that rat!

Springing into action, you turn over the cage and tear off the door. The monster rodent snarls and puts up a furious battle.

In the end, you win. The creature lies motionless on the cellar floor. You've actually killed another animal—and with your bare paws.

How do you feel? Triumphant! A little guilty. Confused. Even angry. When Yark cracks the door to investigate, you plunge outside before the two humans can do anything to stop you.

You bound away from the Old Puritan Inn to regain control of yourself. Cutting through a nearby farm, you startle a crew of field hands. One of them yells, "Wild cat! Kill it!" They chase you with hoes and pitchforks.

Wait, you think, *I'm not a wild cat!* In your mad desire to escape, you forget all about *SPELLCASTER* and the spell that will return you to human form.

The claw is on the other foot now, it seems.

Go to PAGE 89.

Picking up *SPELLCASTER*, you quickly walk into the woods at the edge of the park to avoid Fredrika. With limitless power in your hands, you aren't going to be disturbed by *anybody*!

In the dappled light of the woods, you pause and flip open the book. *With the right spell*, you think, *I could do anything!*

You sit on a smooth rock and flip through the pages until you find a section entitled: Z⊥Y✱↑人. You're getting pretty good at the code, so you translate that word as "strong."

"That's the one for me!" Your hand trembles with excitement as you trace your finger under the instructions for casting the spell. You shiver with anticipation and mumble the magic words.

Instantly, a tingle of energy crawls along your arms and legs. Your heartbeat slows down, and you actually feel stronger. Experimentally, you flex your arms the way you've seen weightlifters and wrestlers do. The sound of your shirt's seams ripping, however, makes you stop flexing at once!

"Wow!" you whoop. "Look out, world! Here I come!"

Triumphantly, you pick up a smooth pebble and fling it at a nearby tree. The stone smashes into the trunk with a sound like a rifle shot!

Turn to *PAGE 43*.

Barely able to believe your ears, you race to the tree and poke your finger down the deep hole drilled into the trunk. The end of your finger presses against the pebble buried in the wood. It's red-hot!

"Whoa!" you say, studying the tender burn on the end of your finger. "If I can just toss a rock that hard, I wonder what else I can do." You grab a stout limb on the tree, just to see how far you can make it swing. It pulls back so easily, you have no warning when the branch simply rips from the trunk. Now, *that's strong!*

You drop the tree limb and wipe your dirty hands on your pants. "Wow! I'd better watch what I do from now on," you exclaim.

A growl from your stomach reminds you that you haven't eaten anything since lunch. All this exercise must have stirred up your appetite. You're starving!

You pick up *SPELLCASTER* and return through the park where you spot a couple of kids from your class. You recognize them as a pretty tough pair. Now, they'd be impressed with your new-found strength, you think. On the other hand, you don't really *know* the kids—and you *are* hungry.

Will you take the time to show off? Turn to PAGE 75.

Will you go for food? Turn to PAGE 64.

Yark leads you to a clearing in the woods and stops beside a large block of granite. "Stand back!" he orders.

Remembering the strange things this man does, you obey. He takes a handful of glittery powder from a pocket, flings it at the boulder, and says, "Bazzgroat! I command you open!!"

Unbelievably, a golden doorway opens in the gray rock. Yark smiles at you. "Welcome to the Endless Cave," he says.

You approach the sunlit boulder and gingerly touch the solid rock around the opening. You hold your breath and plunge your hand into the cool air inside the cave. "But—but how did—" you stammer, stopping short because Yark has vanished. Cautiously, you step into the cave.

Just ahead, a black iron stairway spirals into a pit.

"Wizard's apprentice," you mutter, looking back to the shaft of sunlight coming from the clearing. "Endless Cave," you whisper warily over the clang of your footsteps as you descend the iron steps. With a sudden WHOOSH, the opening disappears, plunging you into darkness.

If you choose to go back up the steps, turn to PAGE 35.

If you descend, turn to PAGE 59.

If it's best not to move at all, turn to PAGE 72.

You decide to stay in the air—why waste time snooping? You swoop away over the nearby fields.

It's a tremendous feeling—gliding. Then you spy a gopher creeping from a hole. *Dinner*, you think, tucking your wings to your body and plunging toward it.

Just as you shoot your wings out to break your fall, you hear a hollow *POP!*

With a bone-jarring thud you land on the ground. The spell has worn off. You're just an earthbound human again.

Fortunately, you haven't broken *every* bone in your body. Eventually, a farmer finds you and takes you to a hospital.

During your long recovery, you write a book about the adventures of a hawk. The critics call it an astounding feat of imagination. We'll never reveal your secret—especially since this is . . .

THE END

You dash in front of the two rude kids on their way to the bench.

"Can I grab a seat for you two?" you offer with a sly smile.

Remembering your super strength, you firmly plant your feet and pull up on the bench. To the shock of the turkey-twins, you tear the bench right out of the ground—concrete mountings and all!

Satisfied, you watch them run off.

Unfortunately, those two weren't the only ones who observed you pull the bench from the ground. A local patrolman approaches and suggests you come with him.

Neither he nor your parents are too impressed with your story about showing off your super strength. The city fine for vandalism is very high. And since you spent the last of your allowance on *SPELLCASTER*, you have to work it off.

Certainly, because of your strength, mowing the park lawns and hauling the city's trash is fairly easy. But sometimes, you figure, it just doesn't pay to show off.

THE END

"Yes," you begin, "I know him, but—"

"Silence them both!" the Puritan orders.

Before you can protest, you and the man from the Old Puritan Inn are gagged, tied, and taken to a village.

You are both brought before the town elders and charged with witchcraft. The man is found guilty and sentenced to burn at the stake. Everyone *saw* him appear out of thin air.

But you—you're another matter. Your Mickey Mouse T-shirt and funny speech count against you. But you look like such an innocent child! Since they can't agree on your guilt, you are taken to the town pond for a "trial by water."

"If thou float," the Puritan explains, "thou art a witch. If thou sink, thou art innocent."

They bind your arms and legs and dump you in the water. Even with all your swimming lessons, you sink like a stone! Fortunately, they haul you out of the water, sputtering, but alive and innocent.

Sadly, you can't make it back to the present. The villagers burn *SPELLCASTER* with the old man.

Life as a Puritan isn't *all* bad — even though you get your thee's and thou's mixed up all the time.

THE END

48

Because you've started sneezing, you leave the herbs in the cellar. Tucking *SPELLCASTER* under your arm, you sprint to town. The town is in chaos! People race around swatting giant rats with brooms. What a mess!

Stopping under the candy store's striped awning, you open the book, looking for a helpful spell. But Amy and Joe, two of your classmates, race out and bump into you. knocking *SPELLCASTER* to the pavement.

"What're you doing with *this*?" Amy demands, picking the book up and glancing through it. "It's got magic spells!"

Before you can say or do anything, Amy hands the book to Joe. "I bet you're the one who's responsible for these rats!" Joe charges. Amy agrees. And they drag you to the police station.

Since you're the one with *SPELLCASTER*, the town blames you for the magic mess. You're tried under the old witchcraft laws and found guilty. Fortunately, they don't burn anyone at the stake anymore. They just jail you for life. In solitary confinement. With bread and water.

Yark and Fredrika land a two-million-dollar contract to exterminate the rats. The town opens a museum based on the event, changes its name to Hamelin, and becomes quite a tourist attraction.

THE END

As soon as your paws hit the floor, you scramble out of the living room and race into the kitchen.

The window is still open!!

Without breaking your stride, you spring through the opening and land on the ground outside. Safe at last!

Dashing around the corner, you pause outside the cellar door. That strong animal scent still lingers in the air. And it's definitely coming from the cellar.

You've tried going through the house, so you don't see any other way to get *SPELLCASTER* back. Besides, it's probably just a gopher or something. A cat can handle anything, you tell yourself.

Go to PAGE 53.

"I can do parlor tricks, too," the woman says. "Watch thisssssssss . . ." Hissing, Fredrika melts to the ground in the shape of a rope and slithers toward you.

With a shock like ice water thrown in your face, you realize that Fredrika has transformed herself into a giant king cobra, and she's coming right at you!

What will you do?

In a contest of magic, the outcome is chancy. So pick a number from 1 to 12.

If your number is 3, 6, 9, or 12, you jump away, just out of reach of the snake. *Continue on PAGE 28.*

If your number is 2, 4, 8, or 10, you freeze and yell, "Help!" *Turn to PAGE 17.*

If your number is 1, 5, 7, or 11, you jump about two feet. Quick, *jump to PAGE 65.*

You swoop toward the carriage house window to look inside, but the window is clouded with dust and cobwebs. It's too dusty to see inside. You spy a partly boarded-up vent near the roof and fly up to investigate.

The boards are old and loose. There's just enough space for you to tuck in your wings and work your body between the slats. But in maneuvering your tail through, a quill catches and pulls away a rusty nail. The slat swings down!

Startled into flight, you land on a nearby crossbeam to smooth your feathers. You glance at the vent. The slat blocks your exit! You're trapped!!

You're exposed, sitting on a wide beam in the open ceiling. Across the carriage house is a loft. That looks safer.

Fortunately, they haven't seen you yet. Unfortunately, the board made such a racket when it swung down that the man is coming up to investigate.

Your instinct is to stay hidden. Your second thought is to use your wings and fly to the far side of the barn—out of sight. The hawk in you says, "Fly." The human in you says, "Hide." Which is it?

FLY to PAGE 79.
HIDE on PAGE 67.

52

You flex your claws and dash up the tree. From your limb 25 feet above the ground, you see Fredrika grab the book and stride back toward the old inn.

You should follow her. You know that. But you don't know how to get down. Head-first seems wrong. Tail-first is out of the question! And the branch you're clinging to suddenly seems very shaky.

You don't have to wait long. A girl from your class, Amy Price, sees you and calls the fire department. Amy is a notorious snitch and troublemaker—and you don't like her! But you owe her one for calling for help this time.

The fireman pulls you down from the tree. But, *uh-oh*, he believes Amy when she says you belong to her. He even puts you in a portable kitty carrier so she can carry you easily.

You protest. Not only is Amy a snitch, she lies! Can't they see that? All you can do is snarl and meow!

Since you are helpless for now, get a glass—make that a saucer—of milk, and take a break. This is . . .

THE END

You creep through the open cellar door, pausing just inside to let your eyes adjust to the darkness. The animal scent is so strong it puckers your nose. Your sensitive cat eyes pick out packing crates and big black kettles piled along the walls.

You hear a sound like heavy breathing, and look around for the source. Far back in the darkest corner is a huge wire cage—and straining to get out is an enormous *rat!* That's what smells! Its red eyes glow in the dark and its long fangs tear at the cage. Normally you would be horrified at such a sight. But instead, all you can think is . . . dinner!! You're sure it will mean a giant case of heartburn.

Cats are curious, and you're no exception. You stalk to the cage, wondering how there could be such a huge rat. Where'd it come from? More to the point, what's it doing here? Isn't there a public health law against keeping rats at an inn?

Your head is so filled with questions that you don't notice that the rat escapes. It's all over pretty quickly. It's you who gives *him* heartburn.

THE END

"Transformation," you quote. "What's that mean?"

Scanning the page, you skim over words like *transmutation* and *metamorphosis*.

You flip through the section.

You stop at a series of paragraphs with black boxes drawn around them. Two of the titles over the boxes are: "How To Become a Hawk" and "Turning Yourself into a Cat." *Transformation* must mean changing yourself into something else!

"Well, if that's what it means, let's see if it works," you murmur, checking quickly to see how to change back. "But which shall I try first? Hawk? Or cat?"

Want to be a hawk? Turn to PAGE 6.
Want to be a cat? Turn to PAGE 13.

You stay under the elm, watching the woman approach.

When she gets a few yards away, she hails you with a wave.

"I'm glad I found you," she says. "I want to buy the book back. I'll give you twenty dollars for it."

"*Twenty!*" you exclaim. "Sure!" But before you hand over the book, you hesitate. The whole situation is pretty bizarre! If she's willing to pay twenty, maybe someone else would buy it for fifty! And if she wants the book that badly, why did she sell it in the first place?

You snatch the book back. "My grandpa always says, 'If a deal looks too good to be true, it usually is.' "

She glares at you. "I've made you an offer. Take it or leave it."

Take it? PAGE 70.
Leave it? PAGE 87.

"I saw lights like rainbows and heard a hundred voices talking all at the same time," you tell Yark. "Then everything started spinning around."

The way he stares reminds you of someone studying a nasty bug under a microscope. It feels as if he can see through you!

"Lights *and* voices," Yark mutters, stroking his chin. "That won't do."

You're unprepared for his sudden lunge that shoves you back into the Crystal Hall. While you scramble to your feet, Yark intones something and waves his arms.

An iron grate appears in the doorway, caging you in the Crystal Hall.

"Enjoy your visions, apprentice." Yark spits out the words. "Too much power is dangerous in one so young. It might even kill you." The hall rings with his sinister laugh as he stalks away, leaving you rattling the bars.

"Why are you doing this?" you call.

With sudden insight, you know: it's because you're a threat to him. You are stronger than Yark! And you know if you're stronger, you can defeat him! But how?

Get ready for the fight of your life on PAGE 90.

58

Fredrika shrieks and grabs for you, but you're much too fast!

You beat your wings and soar out over the countryside until you come to the local dump. After leaving the beaker in an old oil drum, you fly back to the park. Your wings are getting unsteady.

You drop to the ground under the old elm tree and feel a hollow POP! in your head. Stunned, you look at your human hands and arms. You've made it back!

During the next few days, you try to convince the authorities that you saved the town. The police laugh. The newspaper tells you they don't print fiction. And your parents ground you for staying out too late.

Sometimes it's tough being a hero.

THE END

You pick your way down the steps, surrounded by a blackness so deep you fear you may have gone blind. Surely Yark is somewhere down below—you hope. But the only sound on the iron stairs is the sound of your own footsteps. Is this some sort of trap?

Fear nibbles at your mind. What if this really *is* a trap? Or what if you are blind?

You stop with one foot almost touching the next step. "What am I doing?" you whisper to yourself. "I'm *not* taking another step — that's what I'm doing!"

With a stout heart, turn to PAGE 72.

You stay near Yark. Anyone who says you're "gifted" has to be a friend.

"There!" he says, smiling at you. "The cat's not only gifted, it has excellent taste!" Picking you up, he leads the way down to the gloomy cellar.

Fredrika snaps on a lightbulb that swings from a frayed extension cord. Along one wall is a workbench equipped with strange-looking stuff like jars of herbs and pots of foul-smelling liquids. In one corner a rack of cages imprisons a mob of squeaking rats!

Fredrika stalks to the workbench and picks up a book — *SPELLCASTER!* "This better work, Yark," she says. "The town council rejected our demand for two million dollars! They laughed at us! Now it's time to carry out our threat. Then we'll have the last laugh! Imagine, a plague of giant rats in their precious town!"

You can see why the council laughed! You'd laugh, too, if you weren't a cat. What a ridiculous idea!

"Well, we've got the rats," Yark sighs. "It's the giant part we still need." He eyes you skeptically. "I hope this plan works."

Will it? Continue on PAGE 61

Yark unlatches a cage, releasing a brown rodent, while Fredrika scatters some herbs on you. Then, resting her hand on your head, she casts a spell. Your skin tingles!

POOF!! The rat's as big as a sheep!

"It works!" they both yell happily. They shove the rat outside and magically make the others huge, too.

After they're done, the two humans close you in the cellar — with *SPELLCASTER* — while they go to watch the confusion in town.

They can't get away with such nastiness! you think. But what can you do to stop them? As a cat, nothing! So you nudge the book open with your nose and find the directions to return you to human form. Fortunately, you have everything you need in the cellar to work the magic.

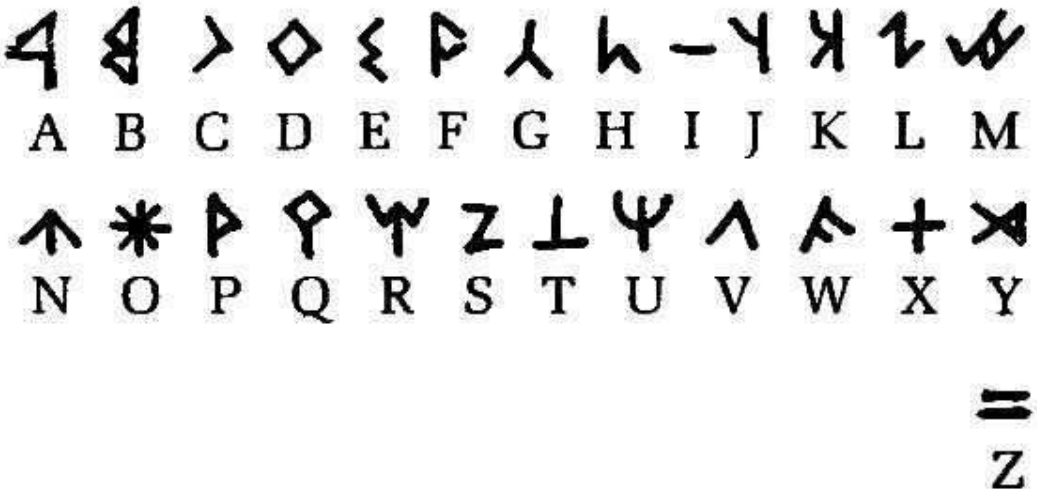
POOF!

Now that you're human *and* have *SPELLCASTER*, you're free to go. But maybe you should take a few herbs with you; they might come in handy later on. Then again, you've done pretty well so far without them—and you really don't know what they do.

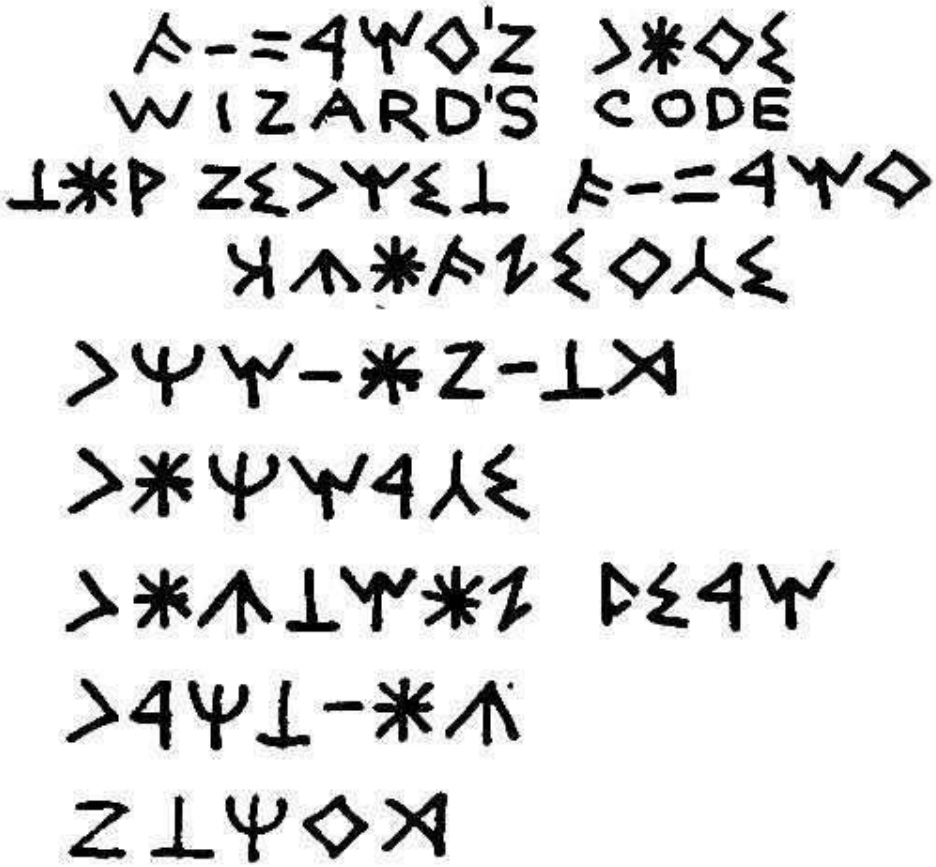
Do you have hay fever? Leave the herbs and go to PAGE 48.

If you aren't allergic, take the herbs with you to PAGE 84.

You flip to the coded page and see strange writing with what looks like a key.



Using the above key to the code, translate the following message. The first line is already done.



Continue on PAGE 63.

WIZARD'S WORKSHEET
(to practice writing in code)
Write your name in Wizard's Code:

_____

Wizard's Code:

Second line: _____

Third line: _____

Fourth line: _____

Fifth line: _____

Sixth line: _____

Seventh line: _____

Eighth line: _____

_____

32.

Or, check your work on PAGE 86.

You're too hungry to show off right now, so you walk to the nearest hamburger place. On the way, you check the change in your pocket and figure you have just enough for some french fries.

You shove through the frosted doors and find the end of the line. Standing there, you're aware of your hungry stomach growling loudly. The inviting smell of burgers, onions, and fries is enough to make you look anxiously for an open cashier. But, just as you step up to the counter, you hear the front door fly open and a gravelly voice command, "All right, everybody — on the floor. Don't move or I'll shoot!"

It's a robbery! The cashier's face turns white and she dives to the floor behind the counter. You drop down, making sure your body covers *SPELLCASTER* so the robber won't see it. You look behind you.

A burly man, dressed in jeans, waves a gun from side to side. His nervous eyes twitch from person to person before he steps up to the cash register next to you. Then he looks you in the eye and snarls, "Nose on the floor, kid."

This guy means business.

Go to *PAGE 92*.

Whoops! You didn't jump far enough. The cobra gets you and this is . . .

THE END

(Quick! No one's looking. Go back to PAGE 8 and pick another number.)

You walk over to the underground lake and gaze into the water. A large bubble erupts in the middle of the lake with a sudden BLURRP!

"That is Medlar." Yark's voice startles you. He's changed! Instead of his suit, he's dressed in a long black robe tied with a silver rope belt. A huge gold key dangles from a heavy gold necklace, and he is gazing at the black water. "No one has ever seen Medlar, but he lives there under the lake."

Then, he turns to you. "Where should we go?" he muses. "To the Crystal Hall — or to the Chamber of Whispering Spheres?"

Flip a coin. Leave the choice to fate.

Head to the Crystal Hall on PAGE 37.

Hightail it to the Chamber of Whispering Spheres on PAGE 22.

You lower your feathered head and freeze, motionless on the beam. You're hidden from below by the wide beam. You hear footsteps tread up a nearby ladder. "Nothing here," the man's voice calls. "Probably just the wind."

Relieved, you hear him descend.

"Are you sure this magic potion will work, Yark?" the woman asks. You hear the clinking of glass.

"Careful!" he warns. "That potion is irreplaceable!"

Magic potion!? Irreplaceable?? Unable to contain your curiosity any longer, you silently lean forward, gazing down.

Below, Yark and Fredrika huddle over a workbench strewn with herbs, jars of animal parts (with labels like BAT SNOUTS and MOUSE WHISKERS) and beakers of vile-looking liquids. Fredrika holds a beaker of milky fluid up to the light.

What awful stuff could that be?

Turn to PAGE 68 and see.

"One cup in the town's drinking water . . . and within days, those people will be our slaves!" Fredrika swirls the stuff in the glass beaker and smiles evilly.

"Let's go," Yark says, crossing to hold open the door for Fredrika. They exit, leaving it open a crack.

What should you do? You *hope* they aren't serious!

They're probably just nuts. How could they enslave a town with some glop brewed up in a barn? You don't want to cause a lot of trouble if they're basically harmless.

But you used clover leaves and rock salt to become a bird. If they're using *real* magic, you've got to warn the police!

If you want to try and get more information, turn to PAGE 91.

If you want to go to the police, you'll find them on PAGE 78.

You relax as the man holds you and scratches your ears. "You'll make a nice familiar," he comments.

"Meow?" you ask. *Familiar!* What does that mean?

"It's almost as if you understand," he says, looking into your eyes. He squints at you and murmurs, "I wonder . . ."

"There!" Fredrika announces, bustling into the living room. "I've taken care of the mess in the kitchen." She stops short and points at you. "What's that, Yark?"

"Why, it's your familiar," he says.

"I've never seen that cat before in my life! Get rid of it!" she orders.

"Let's not be hasty," Yark says. "This looks like a gifted cat. And we need a good one to give our spell its punch."

You gather a familiar is an animal that makes a magic spell work. Maybe you should stick around.

Yark puts you down. You figure you have three choices: (1) You could escape and try to reenter the inn from the cellar; (2) You could stay near Yark, who seems to like you; or (3) You could cozy up to Fredrika and try to find the book.

Time to choose!

If you pick the cellar, go to PAGE 49.
If you stay near Yark, go to PAGE 60.
If you try Fredrika, go to PAGE 10.

70

You accept the twenty dollars. That's eighty games of Chomp and Shread down at the video arcade. Great! Except you lose interest after the fifteenth game. Oh, well.

But if you'd held on to *SPELLCASTER*, who knows what riches you might have gotten? Sadly, without the book, this is . . .

THE END

"I won't tell you anything," you say. When Yark's face turns red with rage and frustration, you know you'd better do something — quick! You lie. "Because there isn't anything to tell."

Momentarily satisfied, Yark grabs you by the arm and leads you back to the main cavern where he forces you to sit near the spiral stairs. "We must begin your spell-casting lessons." Something in his abrupt approach makes you very uneasy.

"Repeat after me," Yark commands. "*Tempus destruendi.*"

But before you can open your mouth, you hear a gravelly voice in your head saying, *Yark is trying to trick you. Don't say a word.*

Hastily, you look around for the source of the voice. Yark doesn't seem to hear it. And the only unusual thing is the lake fizzing with tiny bubbles. Yark told you that was Medlar, the creature who lives under the lake. Could it be he who is warning you?

"*Tempus destruendi!*" Yark says through clenched teeth. "I don't have all day! Repeat what I said!"

"Don't do it," the gravelly voice warns.

Skip to PAGE 73.

You freeze on the spot. Stranded in the darkness, you hear a distant rush of water and the loud thumping of a drum.

Wait. That's not a drum — it's your heart. Almost suspended, one foot on the iron step, one foot in midair, you feel the updraft from the pit below.

A flare of light beside you nearly scares you to death. Yark's voice whispers softly, "Well done." His face seems to float in the void beside you.

"You mastered your fear and exercised caution," he says. "Come along."

Yark and the light seem to drift downward. Peering into the blackness all around, you realize there isn't much choice but to follow.

But you don't like being tricked and you don't want to be surprised again. Maybe this is the time to say something to Yark.

If you speak up, turn to PAGE 30.

If you think you'd better play along, turn to PAGE 18.

Yark is trying to kill you, the voice warns. *You must do as I say.*

Recalling Yark's suspicious hostility outside the Crystal Hall, you realize he is dangerous!

Dentes peccatorum contrivisti, the strange voice says in your head. *Repeat that.*

Haltingly, you do. Suddenly, Yark doubles over in pain. "Medlar!" he roars. "Why do you betray me?"

But before Yark can move, the voice prompts you, *Hic iacet Yark!*

You stammer over the words, then watch Yark drop to the floor — unmoving.

You've vanquished Yark! the excited voice announces. *And freed the Endless Cave from his evil! For your bravery, I will grant your every wish.*

From now on, you live a charmed life. Riches, power, health are all yours, granted by the unseen Medlar. He'd have gotten rid of Yark himself, but he has no voice — only thoughts. And though his power is the greatest of all, he cannot use it without a voice to cast spells.

You become his student, his voice, and the Wizard of the Endless Cave.

THE END

74

You toss the book on the ground and run. *No book is worth this*, you think.

You run into Fredrika and almost knock her down. "Where is it?" she demands.

"I dropped the book back there." You jab your thumb over your shoulder. "Go fight the old man. I left it for him."

"No!' she shrieks, her face a mask of anguish. "Not with the Black Force!" She dashes into the woods.

"Black Force!" you scoff. "What nonsense!" With no more to do, you head home.

Later, while you're watching reruns, all the television networks interrupt programming for a special bulletin. The world has been taken over by a circle of evil sorcerers called the Black Force. They have created a web of timeless power with a document called — *SPELLCASTER!*

You remember the warning inside the front cover: "In your hands rests timeless power. Apply it wisely!" You can hardly believe it! Timeless power. Oh, how could you have been so dumb, you think ruefully. If only, *only* you had had the sense to hang on to the book. You probably could have gotten a hundred dollars for it!

THE END

You stroll over to the tough-looking pair and clear your throat to get their attention.

"Whaddaya want?" one of the toughs asks around a toothpick hanging from a corner of his mouth.

Maybe this wasn't such a good idea after all, you think for a fleeting moment.

"Yeah, kid," the other one sneers, landing a shove on your shoulder, "speak up! Can'tcha see we're busy here?"

"Just thought you'd like to see something," you say, straightening your shoulders.

The first kid studies you narrowly. "You got nothin' to interest us," he declares finally. Leaning toward his friend, he adds, "Let's go grab a bench." They walk away.

You don't like being treated rudely, even by the gruesome twosome. Your blood boils. They won't get away with that, you vow. They can't just walk away from *you!*

Turn to PAGE 46.

You try to shield yourself from the man's attack with *SPELLCASTER*.

Suddenly, the heavy book slips to the ground. Your eye falls on the strange code you saw before:

P4Z⊥ P4Z⊥ P4Z⊥

"It seems to be *Past Past Past*," you say to yourself, proud of how quickly you've mastered the code.

You start to run again and find you're enveloped in a thick mist. There's a strange, sulphur-like smell in the air, and before long you are very disoriented. Panting, you double over to catch your breath.

You straighten — and freeze. You're facing a stern-looking man in a Puritan costume. You spin quickly, surrounded by an angry mob of Puritans! Then there's a flash, and out of thin air, the creepy old man in black appears! *It can't be!* you think. *He's run into this trap, too.*

You're both grabbed by the mob. The stern Puritan aims an accusing finger at the old man, asking you, "Dost thou know this witch?"

What does he mean? You haven't been formally introduced, but you *have* tangled. How should you answer?

"Yes, but . . ." Go to PAGE 47.

"No!" Go to PAGE 80.

You fly to the nearest police station. Unfortunately, as a hawk you can't talk, so you swoop around inside the station house, stirring up the paperwork on littered desks. The officers eventually shoo you out.

Frustrated, you perch on the windowsill outside. Suddenly there's a ringing in your ears, followed by a POP! You tumble off the sill — human again!

This time, when you dash into the station with your warning, the police understand you when you tell them the town's water is being poisoned! They hurry to the reservoir.

Too late!!

Within days, everyone in town is walking around like a zombie, obeying the sinister wishes of Fredrika and Yark. Everyone but you. You are saved because you now avoid water altogether. You eat raw vegetables and packaged foods.

The oddest part is that never in your wildest thoughts did you imagine you'd miss taking a bath. But you do.

THE END

FLY! your thoughts scream.

You plunge off the beam and drift across the inside of the carriage house.

"There! It's a bird, Yark!" Fredrika calls to the man climbing the ladder. She's pointing at you. "Kill it!"

With nightmare slowness, you beat your wings. They're as heavy as lead. Heart pounding like a jackhammer, you dive for the window. Tucking your wings against your body, you smash through the brittle glass. The shattering of glass is the last thing you hear before . . .

You jerk awake under the elm. It's nighttime. Your stomach hurts. Just beyond your grasp lies some rock salt and a bunch of clover. Clover? Rock salt? What were you doing with them? You're beginning to remember something — a dream?

You remember you felt woozy . . . then you must have blacked out. "What a wild dream," you mutter, shaking the last of the dizziness from your head. "No more magic!" you say, pulling a long black feather out of your hair. A feather?!

THE END

"No!" you state firmly. "I've never seen this man before in my life!" You try to look shocked. "You say he's a witch?"

The Puritan looks at *SPELLCASTER* and frowns. "How camest thou by this evil book?" He takes it from you and passes it to someone else in the crowd.

Evil? Your mind races, remembering Fredrika's warning of danger. You think maybe she was right. You're sure they don't want to know about Fredrika, or how you came back through time — *especially* not that part!

"I bought the book," you answer.

For the time being, you figure you're safe from the old man; it's the rest of the mob you need to worry about. You've got to make them think you're on their side!

Suddenly, Fredrika walks down the path! She's dressed like a Puritan! *What's she doing here?* you wonder.

"Release that daft child!" she orders the stern one. "The poor thing is quite mad, always running away from my village. Come, I will explain." She takes the Puritan by the elbow.

Should you trust her? Or do you think she's going to make your situation worse?

If you want to let Fredrika do your talking for you, turn to PAGE 83.

If you think you had better talk to the Puritan yourself, turn to PAGE 93.

You try to ignore the whispering from the strange spheres inside the chamber.

"You will resent my power, too," Yark mutters to himself, fumbling with the lock. "It's always the same — they come to learn and end up trying to take over. Just as I did with old Garth." Suddenly the lock gives way. "There!"

What's he jabbering about? You aren't trying to take over! You're about to protest when the door swings open. You're unprepared for Yark's jealous attack as he hurls you inside with the whispering spheres.

Through the barred window, you hear Yark weave a spell. You feel yourself getting lighter and drifting slowly up . . . up . . . toward the ceiling. You try to yell, but all that comes out is a whisper!

You hear the key turn in the lock.

It turns out that Yark was right, after all. Now that you're a sphere, you *do* resent the power that put you there.

THE END

You decide to try the door. But, since you have paws instead of hands, you can't turn the knob.

Then you realize how big you are. *A tiger doesn't need to use a knob*, you think. *A tiger just smashes through the door.* You've seen it done a hundred times in old movies. And it works!

Just outside, Yark and Fredrika tumble back. They've been listening at the door! They're so surprised, they don't put up a fight when you spring. You snatch *SPELLCASTER* in your jaws and stalk away.

Stalk away to PAGE 14.

You stay where you are and watch the whispered conversation between Fredrika and the man in the Puritan costume. From time to time he glances with pity in your direction. At last he returns and orders, "Unhand the child."

Fredrika, spouting flowery thanks, quickly hustles you down the path, into the woods. Safely out of sight, she murmurs a spell and leads you back through the eerie fog and into the present.

"Nicely done," she says with admiration. "You handled yourself pretty well back there. I'm afraid old Yark didn't get off as lightly, though." She chuckles.

"Old Yark?" you ask. "You mean that creep who tackled me? You *know* him!?" You eye her. "Say, who *are* you?"

"I'm Fredrika. He and I work for different . . . well . . . groups." She appraises you, eyebrows raised. "There aren't many, you know, who can pass through time so well. Interested in a little advanced study?" She pulls *SPELLCASTER* from a fold in her dress.

"How'd you *do* that?" you ask. "The Puritan took it from me."

"The same way we journeyed through time," she says. "You used the magic words from the book. I used my own time travel spell. It's all magic."

THE END

You grab a handful of dried leaves and press them inside *SPELLCASTER*'s heavy cover. In town, you find chaos in the streets! Rats everywhere! People scurrying around in confusion!

You spot Yark and Fredrika sitting in the diner, gloating over pie and coffee! You must act *now!*

Flipping through *SPELLCASTER* for ideas, you form a plan. Lure the rodents away, then take care of them.

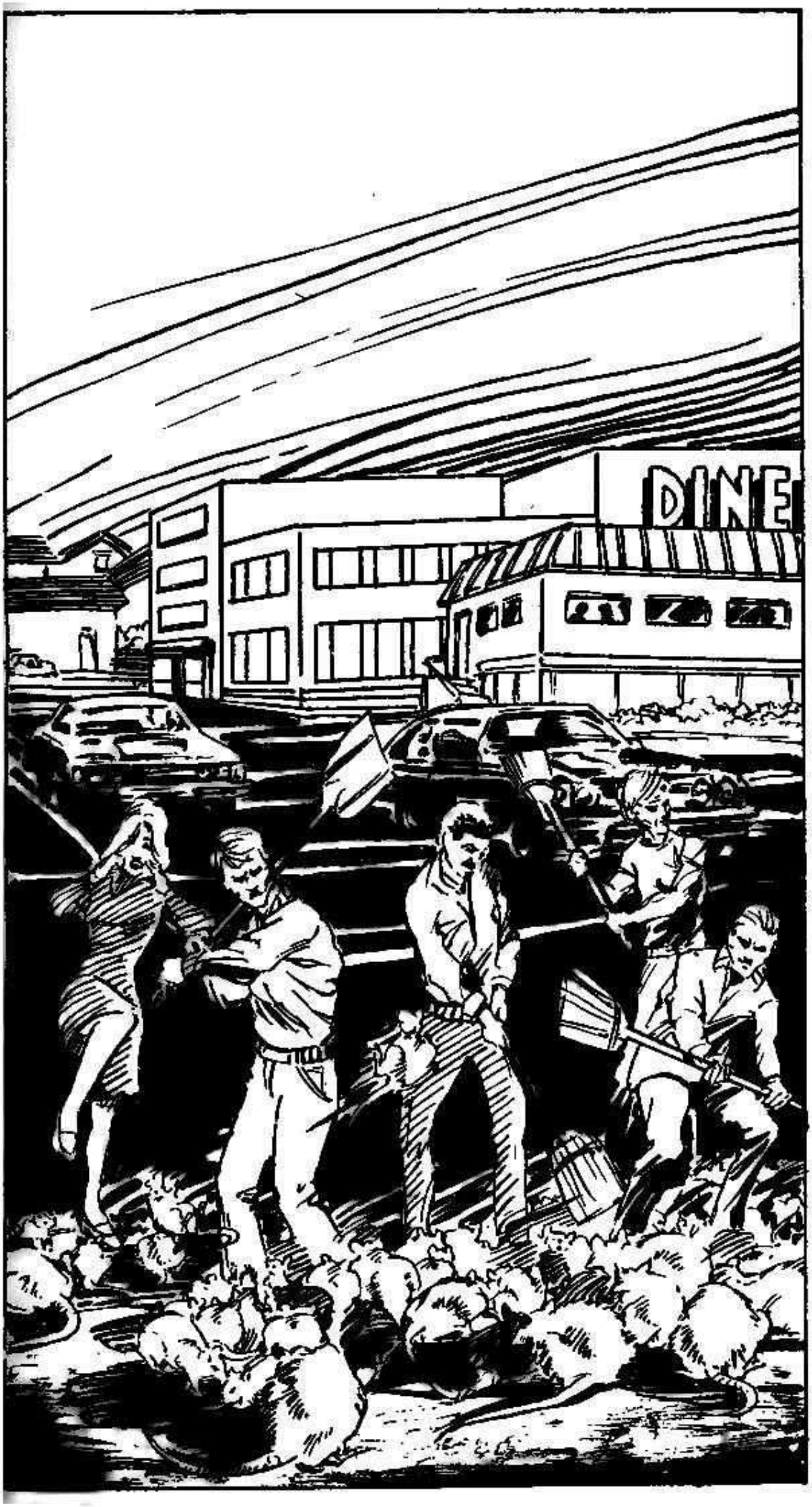
Hastily crumbling the herbs and dropping little bits in the street, you create a trail that leads to the reservoir. Using a simple spell from your book, you make the herbs smell like aged cheese!

The giant rodents scurry after the scent to an imaginary block of cheese in the water. Then, using a descending spell, you clamp a magic lid over the reservior, forcing the rats under and drowning them all!! And do you get a hero's welcome?

Well, no. Your parents are assessed a thousand dollars to pay for dredging the bodies from the town's water supply! They're so angry, they ground you for life.

No one ever connected Fredrika and Yark to the plan. But in the excitement, they hurried out of the diner without paying — and are now doing time in jail. There *is* justice, after all.

THE END


DINE

The decoded message on PAGE 62 is:

WIZARD'S CODE

TOP SECRET WIZARD
KNOWLEDGE

CURIOSITY
COURAGE
CONTROL FEAR
CAUTION
STUDY

The last thing to translate on page 63 is:

Go to PAGE 32.

Well, what are you waiting for? Do it!

"I'll leave it," you answer firmly. "You can keep your twenty bucks."

Abruptly, Fredrika changes her manner. Smiling sweetly, she asks, "Why won't you sell me the book?"

"For one thing, it must be worth a lot more than you're offering," you say. "For another," you add, "I like this old book. I don't want to get rid of it yet."

"I see," she replies, scratching her head. "Then we have a serious problem."

"What do you mean *we*?" you snap. "The problem is *yours*. Now leave me alone!"

Will she? Turn to PAGE 15 and see.

A flash of blue-white lightning blinds you. The deafening thunder reduces your bones to jelly.

"You will *never* compare my teaching with that of a—public—school!" Yark spits out the words.

"And you'll never do that to me again!" you yell back, no longer weak—just angry. "Some teacher! All you've done is haul me underground and try to scare me to death! You've tricked me for the last time!"

You spin on your heel and head for the stairs. "If you want me, I'll be in the park." You stop on the bottom step and turn to face Yark. He looks sheepish.

"I don't know how they did things in the old days," you say, "but today kids have rights. And I won't be pushed around any more!"

"Wait," Yark says. "I am sorry. I want you to stay."

You do. And Yark teaches you all he knows. Years later, when you pick an apprentice, you remember that first day with Yark. So you only scare the kid a little bit.

THE END

The field hands chase you into an empty equipment shed. They slam the door and trap you inside. You're afraid one of them might go for a gun. For several tense minutes you pace the shed looking for a way out. There isn't one! You're caught.

You hear the men arguing about what to do with "a dangerous lion." Now you know how that rat felt—caged and waiting.

You don't have to wait long, however. The men don't shoot you. They turn you over to the local zoo!

You're proclaimed the first of a new species! *Mega calico*. There's an article on you in *National Geographic*. The field hands are interviewed for *Newsweek*. Yark and Fredrika feel guilty because they weren't able to reverse their spell, so they donate a lot of money toward your upkeep. Everyone involved becomes famous.

There's just one tiny problem. The zookeepers feed you a diet of nothing but rats! *Mega Yuck!*

THE END

You turn away from the bars and face the Crystal Hall. The colors start to spin, so you close your eyes.

"Get hold of yourself," you mutter sternly. But your voice sets off the sound of a hundred other voices.

Then, clearly, you hear the sound of one voice saying, *I am Medlar, respected since the start of time. I can help you, if you replace Yark in the Endless Cave.*

The image of the black water floods your mind, and you recall Yark mentioning a creature in the lake. But since the lake is nowhere near the Crystal Hall, Medlar must be using telepathy. However he's talking to you, he wants to help!

Following his directions, you're quickly free. As you run down the hall, Medlar relays a spell to you telepathically.

You surprise Yark sitting beside the lake, gazing into the black water. Before he can move, you say the words. A stunned Yark becomes a fish, flopping around before splashing into the water.

In your career as Wizard of the Endless Cave, you are just and powerful. Medlar becomes your teacher, and then your friend.

In spite of this power, do you miss the simple pleasures of your old age? Nope.

THE END

You decide to follow Yark and Fredrika. Keeping the pair in constant view, you fly high over their heads in the twilight. They go straight to the town's reservoir, climb the rock wall around the water, and stand beside the shore. Fredrika holds the beaker high in front of her while Yark waves his arms, weaving a spell. The stuff in the beaker starts to bubble. It's clear they're not acting!

Tucking your wings into your body, you lunge at Fredrika. At the last second, you reach out with your powerful legs and snatch the beaker with your talons.

QUICK! Get away to PAGE 58.

The robber orders your cashier to get up and collect all the money from the registers. You hear the sound of change clinking and the rustle of bills being stuffed into a paper sack. As the man slams out the door, he threatens, "Don't move!"

Any other day, you would have just stayed put and been thankful to be alive.

But today, you have the magic strength of *SPELLCASTER!* You spring from the floor, remembering the stone you threw at the tree. You dash for the door and see the man running away.

You toss *SPELLCASTER*, Frisbee-fashion, at his back. When he crashes to the ground, his bag of loot bursts, scattering money all over the sidewalk!

You are given a police citation for good citizenship. The burger chain gives you a lifetime pass at their franchises. And your heroism is written up on the front page of the evening paper!

Congratulations! Unfortunately, the police take *SPELLCASTER* for evidence, and your super strength fails before your day comes to . . .

THE END

You'd love to speak to the man in the Puritan costume, but you don't get the chance. You're gagged and thrown into a cabin nearby. You look at the cabin, and it becomes obvious these people live here! This isn't a movie set—it's home. A home from the past. With an eerie chill, you revise that to home *in* the past! It's still hard to believe, but when you repeated those words written in the old code, you were transported back to Puritan days!

Unfortunately, you aren't given the chance to explain where you came from. Since Puritans don't trust witches, you aren't allowed to speak. (They never remove your gag.)

Based on your language, your clothes (the creature on your T-shirt is especially evil, they say), and because you possess *SPELLCASTER*, you are speedily found guilty of witchcraft.

Alas, you are burned at the stake. Since tinder is scarce, they start the fire with the brittle old pages of your book. With both you and *SPELLCASTER* gone, this is . . .

THE END

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- Will you join forces with the Wizard of the Endless Cave? Turn to page 31.
- Want to learn how to fly? Transform yourself into a hawk and soar over to page 6.
- Who is the mysterious woman in white? Can she help you survive a journey into the past? Find out on page 80.

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